

Water Line Hookups Offered to Contaminated Well Users

Lane Street Investigation Site

Elkhart, Indiana

October 2008

Public meeting

EPA, IDEM and city of Elkhart officials are holding a **public information session** about the ground-water pollution in and around Lane Street on **Wednesday, Oct. 15, 7 – 9 p.m. at the Osolo Elementary School, 24975 CR 6 E., Elkhart.**

At the meeting EPA, IDEM and city officials will give presentations and then answer questions about the situation. Officials also want to collect signed access agreements so the water hookups can be done and the private wells safely closed. City of Elkhart officials also want eligible residents to sign a “compact” agreement before work proceeds.

Residents who cannot attend the meeting should make arrangements by contacting Linda Weaver with the Elkhart Public Works Utilities at 574-293-2572.

The water connections will be made at no charge but property owners must sign the access and compact agreements.

See the back page for contact information of the EPA, other federal, state and local officials dealing with the TCE pollution issue.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its state and local partners are offering water hookups at no charge to residents of the Lane Street area whose private drinking wells are contaminated or threatened by pollution.

Underground water supplies – called “ground water” in environmental terms – in the area were contaminated by a hazardous chemical called trichloroethylene or TCE. EPA and Indiana Department of Environmental Management are looking for the source of the TCE, which is a colorless liquid used as an industrial solvent.

IDEM and the Elkhart County Health Department last year discovered highly elevated TCE levels in a sample taken from a private well along Lane Street. Other samples confirmed wells at around 30 residences in the area were affected or threatened by the moving mass or “plume” of tainted ground water. Since the discovery of the pollution, affected residents have been given water filtration systems or provided bottled water.

Affected residents are eligible for water line connections at no charge provided they sign two legal documents. One is an access agreement from EPA allowing workers to install the water hookups and close and plug the private wells. The other document is called a “compact” with the city of Elkhart. In return for the no-charge water connections, homeowners who sign the compact agree not to protest any future attempt by the city to annex the neighborhood. While the city will waive the normal connection fees, residents are still responsible for their monthly water bills.

It is anticipated water line work will start the week of Oct. 20 and be completed in early December. EPA, state and local officials plan to brief people about the situation at a public information meeting Wednesday, Oct. 15 (*see box at left for more information about the meeting*).

Once EPA and IDEM discover the TCE source the agencies can begin working on a long-term plan to clean up the underground water supplies. In the meantime, the municipal water connections will protect people from exposure to the hazardous chemical through drinking water. TCE trapped in the ground water can also evaporate and give off vapors that rise through the soil and seep through foundation cracks. This problem is called “vapor intrusion.” Environmental officials at some point in the future may also check homes for indoor air pollution caused by TCE vapors.

EPA and IDEM have extensive experience dealing with these kinds of environmental issues and solutions in highly industrialized Northwest Indiana. EPA needs the cooperation of Lane Street neighborhood homeowners in signing the legal documents so the Agency can proceed with the water hookups. That will stop any chance of exposure to the contamination through drinking water.

Contact information for Lane Street Site Investigation

EPA contacts

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On-Scene Coordinator
Superfund Division
EPA Region 5
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Community Involvement
Coordinator
EPA Region 5
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312-353-0628
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Region 5 toll-free:
800-621-8431, 9:30 a.m.
– 5:30 p.m., weekdays

Region 5 address:
EPA Region 5
Chicago, IL 60604

IDEM contacts

Mark Jaworski

Site Investigations Section
(sampling results)
317-233-2407
mjaworsk@idem.IN.gov

Amy Hartsock

Public Information Officer
317-233-4927
ahartsoc@idem.IN.gov

IDEM toll free:
800-451-6027

City of Elkhart contact

City Engineering Dept.

(compact information)
574-293-2572

Health-related contacts

Clayton Koher

Regional Representative
(federal) Agency for Toxic
Substances and Disease Registry
800-621-8431, Ext. 3-6086
ckoher@cdc.gov

John Hulewicz

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Environmental Services Division
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Web sites

IDEM Site Investigations

<http://www.in.gov/idem/4143.htm>

Indiana Department of Health

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/18878.htm>

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html>

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LANE STREET INVESTIGATION SITE: Water Hookups Offered to Affected Homes

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